

### Claims

1. In an instant messaging system providing instant message communication between computers, a multi-user computer instant messaging method, comprising the steps of:

providing plural concurrent instant message user logins on a multi-user computer, one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins being a registered buddy of a user of a second computer; and

providing to the second computer an indication that the registered buddy is one of plural concurrent instant message user logins on a multi-user computer.

2. The method of claim 1 in which one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer is a guest login that does not correspond to a specific instant messaging user.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the multi-user computer renders a video display concurrently with the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer over a portion of the video display without a visible window surrounding the instant message.

5. The method of claim 4 in which the instant message is rendered with a user-discernible fade in and a user-discernible fade out.

6. The method of claim 4 in which the instant message is rendered over a marginal region of the video display.

7. The method of claim 4 in which the instant message is rendered over a user-selectable portion of the video display.

8. The method of claim 1 in which the multi-user computer renders a video display concurrently with the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer and the method further comprises rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer concurrently with the video display.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising transmitting from the multi-user computer one of plural predefined instant messages.

10. The method of claim 9 further comprising receiving from a wireless remote control device a user indication of the one of plural predefined instant messages transmitted from the multi-user computer.

11. In an instant messaging system providing instant message communication between computers, multi-user computer instant messaging software in computer readable media, comprising:

software for providing plural concurrent instant message user logins on a multi-user computer, one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins being a registered buddy of a user of a second computer; and

software for providing to the second computer an indication that the registered buddy is one of plural concurrent instant message user logins on a multi-user computer.

12. The system of claim 11 further comprising software to render on the multi-user computer a video display concurrently with the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer.

13. The system of claim 12 further comprising software for rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer over a portion of the video display without a visible window surrounding the instant message.

14. The system of claim 13 in which the instant message is rendered with a user-discernible fade in and a user-discernible fade out.

15. The system of claim 13 in which the instant message is rendered over a marginal region of the video display.

16. The system of claim 13 in which the instant message is rendered over a user-selectable portion of the video display.

17. The system of claim 11 further comprising software to render a video display on the multi-user computer concurrently with the plural concurrent instant message user logins and software for rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer concurrently with the video display.

18. The system of claim 17 further comprising software for transmitting from the multi-user computer one of plural predefined instant messages.

19. The system of claim 18 in which the one of plural predefined instant messages transmitted from the multi-user computer is selected by a user with a wireless remote control device.

20. The system of claim 11 further comprising software to provide one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer as a guest login that does not correspond to a specific instant messaging user.

21. In an instant messaging system providing instant message communication between computers, multi-user computer instant messaging software in computer readable media, comprising:

software for providing plural concurrent instant message user logins on a multi-user computer, one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins being a registered buddy of a user of a second computer; and

software for rendering on the multi-user computer a video display concurrently with the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer.

22. The system of claim 21 further comprising software for rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer concurrently with the rendering of the video display.

23. The system of claim 21 further comprising software for transmitting from the multi-user computer one of plural predefined instant messages.

24. The system of claim 23 in which the one of plural predefined instant messages transmitted from the multi-user computer is selected by a user with a wireless remote control device.

25. The system of claim 21 further comprising software for rendering an instant message on the multi-user computer over a portion of

the video display without a visible window surrounding the instant message.

26. The system of claim 25 in which the instant message is rendered with a user-discernible fade in and a user-discernible fade out.

27. The system of claim 25 in which the instant message is rendered over a marginal region of the video display.

28. The system of claim 25 in which the instant message is rendered over a user-selectable portion of the video display.

29. The system of claim 21 further comprising software to provide one of the plural concurrent instant message user logins on the multi-user computer as a guest login that does not correspond to a specific instant messaging user.